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ABSTRACT

A case study focused on the set-up, execution, and post-debate review of one specific debate held in October 1988 in Rochester, New York among the candidates for the 30th Congressional seat. Data were gathered via pre-and post-debate interviews with the candidates involved, their party chairs and campaign managers, as well as close on-site observation. Data revealed heatedly negotiated rule-making sessions involving stations, candidates and their staffs, a variety of pre-debate maneuvers, the strategies of the candidates during the debate, and the positioning of candidates after the debate for future elections. Findings suggest that a key element of the debates was the free multi-media post-debate press coverage which confirmed for the viewers what they saw or thought they saw in the television performance. (KEH)

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Jockeying for Position in Local Election Debates

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Local election debates are becoming more and more a means by which candidates for public office can enhance their image before voters. In this presentation, I will focus on the set-up, execution and post-debate review of one specific debate held in October 1988 in Rochester, New York among the candidates for the 30th Congressional seat. The primary purpose of local election debates is not for dissemination of information but for the exposure factor - to let the voters see the candidates and hear them - not so much for what the specific content is but rather for how they say it and how they look saying it.

Method:

Information for this paper was gathered via pre- and post-debate interviews with the candidates involved, their party chairs and in some instances their campaign managers. Also, since I served as the producer and host of the televised debate, I was directly involved in the on-going negotiations among all parties. At one critical pre-debate conference involving the major party candidate's representatives to which I was not allowed, the information of what transpired at that meeting was given to me by the station's vice president for programming who did attend.

The Set-up

Television stations are looking for programs which will gather an audience and which will serve the public interest - in that order of importance. Stations are not required to carry debates between candidates for public office but if they choose to do so, they now may stage their own fora, separate from debates sponsored by third party sponsors. In any given election year, stations look for that race or races, that will generate the

most public interest, those that are the "hot" races that are not foregone conclusions as to who is the winner. In this particular case, the most prominent local race in the Rochester community was the 30th Congressional District contest. The incumbent, a first term Democrat, was Louise Slaughter who had come up through the political ranks - having served in both the county legislature and the State Assembly before running for Congress in 1986 against a first term incumbent Republican. Prior to 1984, the seat had been held by Republican Barber Conable for more than two decades. The 1988 race was a contest to see if this first term Democrat could build upon her popularity and be re-elected with a wider margin then when she upset the first term incumbent in 1986.

The Republican challenger was 33-year-old John Bouchard, a County legislator who was seen by his local party as a rising star - someone who could help return the Republicans to their previous stature in local politics.

The debate was set with a call to the incumbent in August. Within a week, the agreement was firm - the Democrat had decided on doing only one televised debate and that would be with us, the public station - so as to "avoid partiality to any of the network affiliates."[1] This particular Democrat did not like televised debates, though she knew the potential benefit of doing them. In a pre-debate interview this candidate had voiced her dislike for the forum saying that too much rode on appearance and on quick recall of, at-times, inconsequential facts. Now that she was the incumbent, she could call at least some shots and chose to limit her exposure to vulnerability. It's also conventional wisdom that the incumbent limits the number of opportunities an opponent may be seen side by side with

him/her. Televised debates put candidates on equal footing which is beneficial to the challenger and detrimental to the incumbent.

The Republican challenger welcomed the August call to debate, anticipating similar opportunities at the other television stations. However, the Republican was also seeking endorsement from the Conservative party - which historically in this particular community could provide swing votes when coupled with running on a major party line.

The challenger in the conservative primary was Tom Cook, the chairman of the local Conservative party who was running, admittedly, not to serve in Washington, but to preserve the Conservative party line for endorsement of a bona fide conservative. The September primary - involving only a few thousand voters - chose the Conservative party chairman: the Congressional race was now three-way on the November ballot.

Broadcast stations carry a lot of power in that they can determine which candidates will appear in televised debates.[2] Should a news director not think an endorsed candidate is "legitimate" then that candidate need not be invited to participate. This producer (myself) believes the public should see for itself all of the bonafide candidates making efforts to be elected. Thus, following the Conservative primary, the Conservative-endorsed candidate was invited to participate in the debate - much to the consternation of the Republican challenger.

The format of the debate was proposed by the station in August and accepted by the candidates: in addition to closing statements, the candidates would question each other - there would be no questions from the moderator or from a panel of reporters. Thus the format was of a "pure" debate - issues the candidates thought important would presumably come forth. Should candidates choose to use the time to ask trivial questions or to

demean their opponent(s), that too could happen. The Conservative and Democrat agreed to the terms of the debate - with specific times allotted for length of questions and answers. The order of appearance would be determined later. The Republican challenger resisted the format that allowed the Conservative to appear and now (late September) was hedging on appearing, despite his campaign manager having agreed to the debate prior to the Conservative primary. The format originally proposed by the station consisted of a 50 minute total program: no opening statements, 30 seconds per question, one minute 30 seconds per response, 30 seconds for rebuttal and one minute 30 seconds for closing statements. A small studio audience would be invited, to be composed equally of candidates' supporters. All legitimate candidates in the race (in the view of the station) were invited to participate.

Pre-debate maneuvers

The jockeying soon began. The pre-debate season (late September to the day before the debate) saw a variety of maneuvers by all three candidates designed to put one particular candidate at an advantage over the other two. Three weeks prior to the debate, negotiations continued to fine tune the format.

Candidates would not be allowed to bring in any notes or pre-written materials into the studio. Questions and statements were to be memorized or outlined mentally. Candidates would be brought into the studio a few minutes before airtime to jot down notes on pads of paper provided at podia.

As the debate date grew closer, the number of contacts between the Republican candidate and the station became more frequent. The Democratic incumbent had pulled a coup. By limiting the debate to just one, the

Republican challenger was hamstrung to schedule other joint appearances where he could confront the Democrat face-to-face. Irked by the presence of the Conservative candidate, the Republicans tried repeatedly to have the debate be just a two way debate. Their argument was that since the Democrat and Republican were the only two "viable" candidates with any chance of winning, shouldn't the public see only the viable candidates.

In a post-debate interview, the Republican candidate lamented the format:

> There was not a serious candidate there and that was Tom Cook and he opened the debate by saying he was not a serious candidate, he had no chance of winning. And that unfortunately diluted the effectiveness of this debate because if it had been a one-on-one debate between Mrs. Slaughter and me, with questions back and forth we probably could have had forty percent more questions answered, I think the people would have been able to see the contrast between the two legitimate candidates for Congress... and I think the public would have been better served.
>
> Personal Communication, J. Bouchard 2/20/89

The Republican's issues adivsor likewise criticized the set-up:

> ... In an incumbent race, I think it's inherently unfair [to have minor party candidates] because you're giving the incumbent the advantage of being off to the side and there's this gaggle of challengers on the other side and it cuts in half or by two-thirds the number of questions the principle challenger can ask of the incumbent. From an incumbent's standpoint, the more people on stage the better they like it. From a challenger's standpoint, if you're the principle challenger it makes your job that much more difficult.... it means there isn't going to be that sort of plaintiff/defendant kind of cross examination that you would have if you were just the principle challenger and the incumbent.
>
> Personal Communication, B. Baker 3/6/89

Finally, the Republicans questioned why the Right To Life Candidate was not allowed to participate. Their reasoning: if three candidates were going to take part, then four should be there, although that further diluted the amount of available time for their candidate. The RTL candidate had indeed filed with sufficient petition signatures to be on the ballot, but was not

actively campaigning. Telephone contact with him revealed that he had no campaign headquarters, did not have campaign literature, was not actively campaigning, and even claimed scheduling conflicts when invited to debate at other locations. The station determined that according to the guidelines of the FCC, the RTL candidate could legitimately be eliminated. Should the RTL candidate subsequently ask for airtime, the station would be obligated to give it to him. But the station saw that as a relatively small price to pay for keeping the debate at a manageable level. Should four candidates appear, airtime per candidate would be very limited. The Republicans' lawyer researched the Communications Law to find a loophole but was unsuccessful. The game rules belonged to the station and to the incumbent.

This so vexed the Republican that a meeting was called two weeks prior to the debate between the Republican's campaign manager and the station management. As the station's Vice President for Television reported the content of the meeting, the Republican Campaign Manager outlined their objections to there being only the three candidates - that there should be just the "legitimate" candidates: the Republican and the Democrat or all four of the candidates on the ballot thereby diminishing some of the potential confrontation between the Republican and the Conservative. The station resisted, saying these were the terms of the debate to which the Republican candidate had earlier agreed. The meeting ended with the Republican camp threatening to not participate at all. Such a threat was idle, and obviously so to all sides. The station would hold the debate regardless and show the empty podium where the Republican should have stood. The Republican would lose his first and only opportunity to debate the Democratic incumbent face to face. Plus, the station would notify the local press before the debate of the stand-off, generating negative publicity for

the Republican and drawing even more public attention to the televised event. As if to hold the station in suspense, the Republican candidate's camp held off making its final determination until one week before the debate. But post debate interviews reveal the strategy was merely political:

> We really had to consider [pulling out of the public television debate] because it was obvious to us that Mr. Cook could take his traditional role as a hatchet man and Mrs. Slaughter could just sit back [and watch as Mr. Cook tried to] move me somewhere on the ideological scale. We had to think about that.
>
> I knew it would be my one opportunity to be on the same stage at the same time and ask Mrs. Slaughter a question and so there really wasn't much doubt in our minds that we would ultimately agree.
>
> Personal Communication, J. Bouchard 2/20/89

> Ultimately we felt it more important to participate in the debate -- on those terms -- than not to participate at all. So I think the TV stations had tremendous leverage but... if you had all four [TV stations in the market] sponsoring debates, it would be easier to pick and choose and say, well, we don't like this format and we're not going to participate in this one.
>
> Personal Communication, B. Baker 3/6/89

Once the decision had been made that all three candidates would indeed participate, further fine-tuning took place. Most notably, the Republican camp requested no camera shot changes -- no cut aways -- once the candidate began speaking, and, a rather unusual request, that the station provide a camera for each candidate and only shoot the candidate with that camera. The campaign issues advisor, himself an amateur photographer, went so far as to suggest how far the camera should be from the podium so as to take maximum advantage of focal length. (!) Having come up empty-handed regarding format and number of candidates participating, this candidate's campaign was apparently grasping at anything to have some influence on, even if it meant a technical aspect of television they knew nothing about. Both the Republican and Democratic campaign personnel requested to see the set in the studio before air. This opportunity was afforded them 2 hours before air. The

remaining element to be settled involved the order of speakers: who would go in what order for opening statements (which had been negotiated by the Democratic candidate back into the format), who would ask the first question, what the order of answering questions would be, and the order of closing statements. For the benefit of the technical crew, it was advantageous to know this order several days before the telecast so camera crews could be assigned shot sheets. But this information could give a particular candidate (ie: the one who knew s/he would be first or last) an edge and s/he could strategize accordingly. The Republican candidate resisted vehemently, saying the order would be drawn by lot 20 minutes before the telecast. This put the candidates on an equal footing - and all presumably planned for every scenario - giving the first opening statement, the last closing statement, asking the last question, etc.

> ...The unpredictable factor was the luck of the draw in terms of who started when and we sort of wanted to go through the different possibilities there to see what would happen if he drew the right to make the opening statement first or if he drew it last and what if, in the order of questioning, he got to question Mrs. Slaughter first or if it turned out he was going to be questioned by Cook and Slaughter first.... We tried as hard as we could to keep bringing the question back to Mrs. Slaughter as we felt she was the issue and so we tried diligently to think of ways to ask the questions that the answer would have to come from Mrs. Slaughter. As it turned out, he wound up getting the chance to question her directly twice, which was as good as we could have hoped for.
>
> Personal Communication, B. Baker 3/6/89

A last minute attempt by the Democratic incumbent to finalize the order a few days before the debate produced an angry response from the Republican who again threatened to withdraw from the debate. Thus, as agreed to, the evening of the debate 20 minutes before air time, representatives for the three candidates met to pull numbered slips of paper out of a bowl. The Conservative candidate pulled the last slot in both opening and closing

statements. The Republican pulled the slip to ask the first question and, thanks to the just-selected order of opening statements which also determined where the candidates would stand in the studio, the Republican was able to ask questions of the Democrat incumbent and have her respond first (before the Conservative's response) for all three of his questions.

The Debate Itself

As the telecast began, the strategy of each candidate became clear. The Republican took advantage of his question order to phrase his questions directly to the Democrat, leaving the Conservative to answer as best he could without a broader question to maneuver within. The Democrat sought to include both of her opponents in her questions, thus diluting the one-on-one confrontation the Republican sought. The Conservative played the role of the philosophical choice - not likely a candidate who was going to win but certainly someone the voters could vote for conscientiously, and he consistently criticized the Republican as being a false Conservative and the Democrat as a liberal "with a capital L".

Taking full advantage of having drawn not only the first opening statement but the first question, the Republican never mentioned the Conservative candidate - didn't acknowledge him -- and throughout the debate never referred to the Conservative as an opponent. In his opening statement, he referred to his "opponent" (singular). A short while later, after having referred to the political benefits incumbents have (including full-time staffs, mailing privileges and being the recipient of political favors from the Speaker of the House) the Republican stated:

> "You [will] see the candidates unadulterated, without the advantages of staff or money and thinking on her feet."[3] [emphasis added]

In concluding his opening remark, the Republican drew a parallel between this race and the race for President - hopefully drawing to himself the popular opinion which by that point had swung decisively to George Bush:

> "I want to be a part of that and I think you'll see there's a clear choice between me and Mrs. Slaughter in much the same way there is a clear choice between George Bush and Michael Dukakis."[4]

Bouchard's three questions all begin with the first name of the Democratic candidate. His strategy was clear: never mention the Conservative candidate and phrase the question so specifically to the Democrat and her record that the Conservative's response seems out of place, if not superfluous.

Bouchard: **Question #1:** Louise, just a few weeks ago, you responded to a questionnaire from the Gannett editorial board that asked you to name four issues where you deviated from the liberal position. Your answer was, 'I'll send you some.' And just last week, on a Channel 10 interview you were asked if there was any issue you disagreed with Governor Dukakis on and your answer was you had to study where Governor Dukakis was on the issues. My question to you is with regard to the higher taxes that President Dukakis would bring us, early release of felons, opposition to the death penalty, could you address those three issues and where you stand on them?

Bouchard: **Question #2:** Louise, you've brought up the question of free trade, I'm going to bring it up again, we'll have a second go-round. It is clear from local polls that 147 thousand local jobs depend on our ability to export freely. Yet we have discussed a little this evening about the Gephardt amendment, the Bryant amendment and protectionism which you have supported in Congress. My question is when so many jobs depend on that and when Michael Dukakis himself has repudiated the Gephardt amendment as the beginning of a trade war, how can you as a representative of this district stand before us and say you supported those amendments when it could cost and would cost, if it became our national policy, thousands of jobs.

Bouchard: **Question #3:** Louise, just a short time after you took office there was a vote that was 31 days after it really had effect and what I'm talking about is a pay raise. Where there was an opportunity for the Congress to vote no or yes on that pay raise. The vote was taken on the 31st day. Many members of the House of Representatives, in fact 60, refused on principle to accept that pay raise yet you, after only being in office one month, accepted that pay raise. I think the people of this district knowing that we have a 150 billion dollar deficit, need to know why.[5] [emphasis added]

Fortunately for the Republican, the Conservative's questions were rather broad - trying to point up the philosophical differences between the two of them on key Conservative litmus test issues. The Conservative could be viewed as trying to stage a debate within a debate. Having been unsuccessful in getting the Republican Bouchard to debate him before the Conservative primary in September, Conservative candidate Cook now had his opportunity to face Bouchard to speak on issues of importance to Conservatives.

> **Question #1:** John, I've been following your position on the Equal Rights Amendment and if I understand it correctly, it's that you want to vote for the equal rights amendment to send it to the states but then you're really against it and you're going to work against it. My question is don't you think the founding fathers when they had a Congress established that when you're against something you shouldn't vote for it? And isn't your position the best of both worlds? Isn't it just a little hypocritical that you want to please the women and then work against it - what is your position on ERA?
>
> **Question #2:** John, I want to talk about abortion, a very emotional subject. After Roe. v. Wade we have abortion on demand. The Hyde Amendment is really irrelevant because there's no federal funding for abortion. So unless you're for a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion you have to be, per se, for abortion on demand. Is that your position, are you in favor of abortion on demand?
>
> **Question #3:** The drug bill which was recently passed in Congress I read your comments on it and that's probably the key element of my campaign is drug abuse and I would have been for the drug bill but, I think I read recently that you said part of the bill was ridiculous. Would you please comment and tell us what is ridiculous about it?[6]

Bouchard waxed philosophical on these answers and draped the American flag around himself, referring to the founding fathers and Thomas Jefferson's recognition of states' rights when asked why he was in favor of sending the ERA question back to the states but would work against its passage at the state level. Or stating that he was pro-choice on abortion while declaring his support for the Hyde amendment as a reflection of being sympathetic with voters who want to control how their "hard-earned" tax dollars are spent.

The Conservative, left somewhat out in the cold by the back and forth between the two major party candidates reiterated his philosophical standpoint throughout the debate. When a question from the Republican was so specific to the Democrat that the Conservative was left outside of the realm of the question, he took the opportunity to state how he felt about several issues, though not asked specifically to do so:

> I'm in favor of the line item veto - it would be a great help with the budget deficit if we could take away pork barrel legislation. I'm in favor of the balanced budget amendment. I'm against the parental leave amendment - this would be too disruptive for business. I'm against public financing of campaigns. On defense, I'm for peace through strength, you can talk about defense but I'm a conservative and I'm also a Marine Corps veteran. On the issues, I don't think Louise and I agree on hardly anything. I'm a conservative, she may deny it but she's a liberal with a capital L.[7]

Not having been elected to public office, but having made a habit of running on the Conservative line to make a philosophical statement, Cook has no legislative record to point to, thus his position in a televised debate is reduced to a symbolic presence on the air and, realistically, a subtractor of time from the other candidates. This, of course, is precisely the argument raised by the Republican challenger - since the third party candidate doesn't have a chance of winning, make maximum use of the limited air time in putting only those candidates on who have a chance of being elected. Yet, the argument can also be legitimately made that the voters have the right to see all the candidates before making their choice. Interestingly, touting himself as the "George Bush conservative," the Republican candidate actually looked more moderate next to the candidate who ran on the Conservative line. The strategy of this Conservative was to repeatedly needle the Republican on the air, make a few passing comments on the liberal Democratic incumbent and tell voters that a ballot of one's conscience is never a wasted vote.

The Democrat - a woman running for her second term in Congress, took full advantage of the fact there were two opponents at the debate: each question was inclusive of both of them:

> **Question #1:** Gentlemen, both of you have made pledges not to raise taxes but one of you already has. At the first opportunity, John Bouchard voted for a 15 million dollar property tax and recently called for a 10 cent a gallon gasoline tax, which would be regressive on all of us. Frankly, I want to ask both of you, why should the voters believe you, that you would not raise taxes when one of you already has?
>
> **Question #2:** Gentlemen, why are you not willing to demand that foreign governments reduce or remove their trade barriers against the United States? Why won't you stand up for the American worker?
>
> **Question #3:** Both of you made it very clear that you're against family medical leave and I wonder if any members of your family have ever had to use family leave and also what would you say to a parent who has to make the choice between spending some time with a critically ill child or staying and taking care of their job or risk losing it?[8] [emphasis added]

Her strategy was to include the Conservative candidate - a recognized outsider to the mainstream of local politics - in her questions. As the luck of the draw would have it, however, the Conservative always answered first, followed by the intended target of her barbs, the Republican. Thus, by the time Bouchard answered, some of the attack of the question had dissipated.

A transplanted southerner, the Democrat used her folksy nature to great effect - a "sales" technique not lost in previous election bids. By pitching herself as being like you and me, the fact that she was running for the House of Representatives became almost secondary. She was not taken with her high office, the tone of her answers was informed (dropping references to bills and amendments without necessarily fully explaining what they encompassed) while at the same time not forgetting to be, first and foremost, the public servant:

> I'd like to open this debate with a quote I used two years ago from a speech by Governor Al Smith. Al had a pretty good litmus test for people running for office: he said before they tell you what

they're gonna do, make them tell you what they've done. I'd like to tell you what I've done. I've brought jobs into this area, that General Railway Signal will benefit from the General Railway Safety Bill which I helped to write. I helped convince the Trojan Company not to move out of state taking their industry and jobs with them but to stay here and even expand...I think we've made a very good start and I ask for re-election so that together we can continue to make a difference.

John, you honestly make more assumptions and do more distortions than anyone I've ever run against before. I've been called a card-carrying this and that and let me assure you [looks directly at camera] the only cards I carry are the same ones you do, library and credit.

...Only one of the three of us would allow the woman to have leave of her job to have that baby, I'm the only one of the three of us who is willing to pay for women and infant and children nutrition programs, I'm the only one of the three of us who want to make sure they have some daycare for their children so they can work and take care of themselves and I'm the only one who wants to make sure the education system is sound that that child will have some chance of being a productive citizen.[9]

Post Debate Mortem

In reviewing the debate after the broadcast, and in talking with the candidates (both before and after this particular debate), the strategies were fairly clear, if varied from candidate to candidate. Slaughter has stated that she very much dislikes debates because of the risk of stumbling over a factual error on live television. But now, in her third and highest tier of public office, she has become quite accustomed to the debate format. Indeed, her first appearance in 1986 running as the challenger saw her armed with documents and papers and appearing not at all relaxed. The 1988 version revealed her as a confident incumbent who employs her transplanted Kentucky accent and down-home manner to great advantage.

Conservative candidate Cook admitted he entered the race not to win (he said so in his opening statement of the debate) but to keep his options open for future races and to keep the Conservative line aligned with a bona fide

Conservative. He was comfortable in his presentation on camera - knowing from the outset that he stood virtually no chance of winning - but did have a chance - of spoiling the Republican contender's appearance in the debate. One would have thought the Conservative would have sided with the candidate most closely aligned with his point of view - but no. The fact that his appearance was helping the Democratic candidate - the person most opposite to his way of thinking - did not alter his decision to appear on the debate. Name recognition was apparently more important than supporting the lesser of two evils. Republican challenger John Bouchard entered the debate with his eyes open and knew he was up against a formidable candidate - formidable in terms of her experience before the camera and formidable because she had much more financial backing than he did and could call upon the House of Representatives to augment her campaign.

Bouchard self-deprecatingly describes himself as an unknown 33-year-old county legislator running against an extremely well-known, extremely popular candidate (is he building her up a bit post-election?) who had the tremendous advantages of incumbency. Post debate, Challenger Bouchard tells himself he can lick his wounds with pride:

> "I went in with my eyes open and I think the debate process is a way to crystallize in an hour or hour and a half whether I belong in that league and again, not to be self-laudatory but I think I proved to myself, if no one else, that yes, I could measure up and I could hold my own in a format like that."
>
> J. Bouchard, Personal Communication 2/20/89

To their credit, the stations which had been locked out of the debate process by the Democratic incumbent (again, she preferred not to debate and being the incumbent, she could call the shots) made the most of the debate, carrying coverage of it on their late local newscasts. Not to be outdone by the PBS affiliate, however, the CBS affiliate set up a mini-debate of its own

in employing its live-eye camera to shoot the Democrat at her headquarters and the Republican in its studio (but not on the news set) and had a live question and answer session on the late newscast. This station, just as the candidates had done, had jockeyed for position to get a head-to-head confrontation between the two major party candidates (the Conservative candidate was not included) when the candidates themselves would not appear. The televised debate on public TV provided the news hook to allow a "second string" debate to take place (albeit for only two minutes).

The parallels to a horse race here are several then. The course, the timing of the featured races, the tip sheet translate to the studio or remote location set by the sponsoring station, the broadcast schedule, the candidates to be included or excluded and they are all the domain of the station. The incumbent, as featured racer, may call some shots: whether or not to participate being a key decision which, if exercised in the negative, can leave young, untested challengers champing at the bit without a contest. If the incumbent in this particular race had agreed to more televised debates, the sponsoring public station could have been left without a true debate, since another station might have been willing to have just the Republican and Democrat debate and not invite the Conservative.

The strategizing before the debate truly is for theatrical advantage. No new content came out in this debate though the candidates all said that debates are a key way to reach the voting public. The debate was: side by side, who sounds the best, who is able to pull off the most attention grabbing sound bite or jab at his/her opponent, who is most unflappable in their answers.

As the chair of the local Democratic Party pointed out, a key element of the debates is the post-debate press coverage. Again, it's free, it's multi-

media (print as well as broadcast) and it often provides the tip sheet for voters: confirming what it was they saw or thought they saw in the television performance.

These candidates jockey for position with the voters, for position within their own parties (Bouchard, despite his loss to Slaughter was lauded as the new Republican monarch by his local party following his campaign) and for future positions in future contests.

The televised local debate, like the presidential debates, will not be the means of disseminating information to the voter, but that is truly not its function. They are a means of reaching the voter with an orchestrated image - the result of heatedly negotiated rule-making sessions involving stations, candidates and their staffs which will at most, result in positive feedback for a particular candidate even help get them elected and at least, position that candidate for the next race, the next year, in a desirable slot next post time.

Footnotes

[1]Personal Communication, Campaign Office of Louise Slaughter, August 1988.

[2]1983 Ruling by FCC and upheld by U.S. Court of Appeals that stations could stage own debates between candidates of their choosing and not violate federal law.

[3]John Bouchard, Republican candidate from opening statement said during broadcast of debate between candidates for 30th Congressional District. Broadcast on WXXI-TV, Rochester, NY, 10/26/88.

[4]Ibid.

[5]John Bouchard, Republican candidate, context from televised debate broadcast on WXXI-TV, Rochester, NY, 10/26/88.

[6]Tom Cook, Conservative candidate from WXXI-TV, Rochester, NY broadcast of debate between candidates for 30th Congressional District, 10/26/88.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Louise Slaughter, Democratic candidate from WXXI-TV, Rochester, NY broadcast of debate between candidates for 30th Congressional District, 10/26/88.

[9]Ibid.